

Vanessa at Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Inc. CareerAdvance

Vanessa Mares came to CareerAdvance, part of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) funded by the Administration of Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance, at age 19. She was the mother of two children and the wife of a young man who was working on completing work toward his high school diploma. Though she had her first baby while she was in high school, she managed to graduate a year early, with the help of daycare in the school and babysitting support from her family.

Her only previous employment had been shelving books in a library, but Vanessa knew she wanted to be a nurse after she experienced the kindness of nurses when she was a scared teenager delivering her first baby. She says, "My nurses were so nice to me and comforted me and just wanted to make sure that me and my baby were safe. That is what I hope to do for someone: I want them to know that I'm there to comfort them and not look down on them, make sure they are safe and comfortable along with their baby." When Vanessa saw a flyer for CareerAdvance, she "knew it was a sign; it was perfect."

Vanessa began her journey with CareerAdvance in January 2011 as a member of Cohort #3 following the nursing track. She has completed the CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) 1-3 and Patient Care Technician studies and is currently enrolled in Tulsa Community College, taking nursing prerequisite classes. She has earned her CNA certificate and the Geriatric Technician certificate, and she has been using her healthcare skills in a home health job while earning these certificates.

She says, "I'm so thankful for this program, such a huge blessing in my and my family's life. Everyone I have met here has been so encouraging. I have new friends that are going through the same struggles as I, and together we can help one another."

In the future, Vanessa says, "I desire to be an RN (Registered Nurse) and work my way to BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing). It'll take time, but it'll be so worth it!" She has started on a career path that promises to help her fulfill her goal of providing for her family.